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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Contemporary
Forms of Slavery
Sixteenth session
29 July - 2 August 1991
Item 5 of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER FIELDS OF CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

Information submitted by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 1695 (LII) of 2 June 1972, entitled "Question of slavery and the slave trade in all their practices and manifestations, including the slavery-like practices of apartheid and colonialism", the Economic and Social Council invited the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to cooperate with the United Nations in its efforts to eliminate slavery, the slave trade and institutions and practices similar to slavery, and in particular to forward to the Secretary-General annually any information at its disposal with regard to the international traffic in persons, including reports on the subject received from its National Central Bureaux. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to utilize such information to supplement information made available to him under the terms of the

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 and Council resolution 1579 (L), entitled "Special arrangement for cooperation between the United Nations and INTERPOL", and to present a summary of available information to the Sub-Commission at each session.

2. The following communication dated 12 June 1991 has been received from INTERPOL.

3. The General Secretariat of INTERPOL, by means of a circular letter dated 17 January 1991, requested its National Central Bureaux as usual to report on any cases of slavery or similar practices which had come to their notice during the year 1990.

4. By 7 June 1991, the General Secretariat had received replies from 55 countries and territories. Fifty of them were entirely in the negative. They were those received from the following countries and territories:

Anguilla (United Kingdom), Argentina, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Congo, Cyprus, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Fiji, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

5. Three other countries, namely, the Principality of Andorra, Hong Kong (United Kingdom) and Poland, while replying in the negative to the question whether institutions such as slavery, bondage or the slave trade existed in their countries, supplied some additional information concerning their national laws, which the General Secretariat summarizes below.

6. The Principality of Andorra reported that a new Penal Code had come into force in the country on 1 September 1990. Under this Code, there is a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment for illegal trafficking in labour, and a maximum penalty of two years and one month's imprisonment for exploiting labour by subjecting persons in precarious circumstances to unacceptable or obviously unfair working conditions.

7. The Hong Kong authorities drew attention to a bill currently before Hong Kong's legislative council which is designed to incorporate into the territory's internal law some of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, e.g. article 8 of the Covenant, which guarantees the right to protection against slavery and bondage. This bill forbids slavery and the slave trade in all their forms on the territory of Hong Kong.

8. Poland explained that under the Polish Penal Code, there is a penalty of at least three years' imprisonment for leading a person into slavery or engaging in slave trade. Elsewhere in the Code, a penalty of at least three years' imprisonment is prescribed for trafficking in women or children.

9. Two countries, Italy and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, furnished information about cases in which women and children were wrongfully placed in a position of dependence. In Italy, during a search of a nomad camp on the outskirts of Milan on 8 July 1990, the Italian police arrested four members of the "Cergari" tribe for reducing to slavery some 10 minors from the "Argati" group, whom they had bought or kidnapped from their families. In the USSR, no cases of slavery, serfdom, debt bondage or the slave trade came to the notice of the authorities. However, 322 cases of women forced into marriage without their consent were reported to the authorities during the year 1990.